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Straits Problem Reveals Need for UN Control of Waterways

FOLLOWING consultations with the United States, Britain and France, the Turkish government on August 22 rejected the proposals made on August 7 by the Soviet Union for a new régime in the Straits which link the Black Sea with the Mediterranean.

RUSSIA'S HISTORIC AIMS. Ever since Catherine the Great, in the Treaty of Kutchuk-Karnardji in 1774, won the right for Russian merchant ships to enter the Straits in time of peace, successive Russian governments have sought by war and diplomacy to win further concessions from the Turks. In this struggle France or Britain, or both, have usually backed the Turkish government against the Russians. The peak of Russian influence was reached in 1833 under the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi when the Sultan, weakened by the revolt of Mehemet Ali, invited the Russians to protect him, and secretly agreed to prevent any other foreign warships from entering the Straits. In 1841, however, the Sultan negotiated with the Big Five of that day (Russia, Prussia, Austria, Britain and France) a Straits Convention which remained the fundamental rule governing the Straits until 1914. According to this agreement, which was reaffirmed in the Treaty of Paris in 1856 and again in the Conference of London in 1871, the Turkish government was to admit no foreign warships to the Straits in time of peace.

Russia's lowest ebb came after its defeat in the Crimean War in 1856 when the Tsar was denied a fleet on the Black Sea and arsenals on its shores, a restriction which was removed in 1871. During World War I, when Turkey joined the Germans, the Russians asked and by secret treaty obtained the agreement of Britain, France and Italy to annex Constantinople and the Dardanelles. The Russian Revolution, however, supervened and the

Bolsheviks renounced Tsarist claims.

THE MONTREUX CONVENTION. After 1919 a weakened Soviet Russia and a victorious Britain reversed their traditional policies. The Russians hoped to achieve security by closing the Straits to foreign warships, while the British, who had previously sought to hem the Russians in, now advocated opening the Straits to warships as well as merchant vessels. Under the able leadership of Mustapha Kemal, a revitalized Turkey profited from this situation. Although a new Convention in 1923 demilitarized the Straits and placed them under an international commission, the Turks used the rising threat of Germany and Italy to persuade the other powers at Montreux in 1936 to terminate the international commission and turn its functions over to Turkey. The 1923 agreement had opened the Straits to all ships at all times except that, if Turkey were at war, only neutral ships could have free passage. At Montreux, however, Turkey won the right to remilitarize the Straits and to close them to all foreign warships when it was at war or in imminent danger of war.

The Soviet Union now seeks to modify the Montreux Convention. Its right to do so was specifically agreed to by the Big Three at the Potsdam conference in August 1945. Its present proposals should occasion no surprise, since similar suggestions were made by Foreign Minister Molotov to Turkish Ambassador Selim Sarper in Moscow over a year ago. In anticipation of Soviet claims, Secretary of State Byrnes last November 2 proposed to Turkey that (1) the Straits should be opened to merchant vessels of all nations at all times, (2) the Straits should be opened to warships of Black Sea powers at all times, (3) warships of non-Black Sea powers should be granted passage only in cases specially

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provided for, and (4) the Montreux Convention should be modernized by such changes as the substitution of the United Nations for the League of Nations, and the elimination of Japan as a signatory.

CONFLICTING PROPOSALS. On the surface the United States proposals provide security for the Soviet Union, particularly since they modify that part of the Montreux Convention which authorized Turkey to close the Straits in case it was at war or in imminent danger of war. In fact, three of the five Soviet proposals to the Turks coincide with American views. The Russians, however, taking into consideration the possibility of war between Russia and the West, cannot overlook the fact that on October 19, 1939 Turkey signed a treaty of mutual assistance with Britain and France. Russia has also charged that during World War II Turkey allowed German warships to use the Straits. The Turkish note rejecting Soviet proposals to revise the Montreux Convention, made public on August 24, was in large part devoted to refuting this accusation, but Turkey admitted that some German auxiliary war vessels got through, disguised as merchant ships. The Russians conclude that their only security lies in Soviet control of the Straits. Therefore the proposals handed to Turkish officials on August 7 included two additional requests—that the administration of the Straits should be in the hands of "Turkey and the other Black Sea Powers," and that Turkey and the Soviet Union should "organize by joint means the defense of the Straits."

It was to these two ideas that the United States government objected in its note to the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, Fedor Orekhov. The American note emphasized that "Turkey should continue to be primarily

PARIS CRISIS FORCES U.S. TO WEIGH LONG-TERM POLICY

The point-counterpoint of mutual recriminations which to an increasing degree has marked relations between the wartime Allies during the past year is assuming a tone of unrelieved bitterness at the Paris peace conference. In the course of verbal exchanges about alleged British misdeeds in Greece and alleged Russo-Yugoslav aggressive tactics on Trieste, the line between former enemies and former allies has become practically indistinguishable. While Italy and the Axis satellites wait in the wings for their cues, hoping for alleviation of their plight through the sympathy of one or other of the United Nations, the Big Three continues to struggle, with no holds barred, for the attributes of power they but recently wrested from Germany, which does not even figure in the cast of characters. This prolongation of the war into the period of would-be peace threatens to fulfill Hitler's hope that, if Germany were militarily defeated, it might at least, in its downfall, encompass the destruction of the victors.

NEED FOR INFORMATION. So confused has

responsible for the defense of the Straits," and also rejected the Soviet request for control of the Straits by the Black Sea powers. The United States proposal that the Dardanelles régime "should be brought into the appropriate relationship with the United Nations" does not seem sufficiently definite or constructive, in view of our insistence that Turkey should be the defender of the Straits. What we are asking is that Russia abandon its historic policy on the Dardanelles. From the point of view of the Soviet Union, however, its need for control of the Straits is no less imperative than that of the British at Suez or the Americans at Panama.

INTERNATIONAL CONTROL. One fact stands out clearly. Russia's position in the Straits has varied in direct proportion to its strength as a great power. Today the Soviet Union is second only to the United States. In this situation the American proposal that Turkey should continue to be primarily responsible for the defense of the Straits must appear inadequate to Moscow. Moreover, a solution along these lines would strengthen Egypt's case for demanding single-handed responsibility for the defense of Suez. Yet Suez and the Straits are clearly international problems requiring international solutions. The Straits Convention of 1923, which was superseded by the Montreux agreement, set a precedent for an international commission for the Straits and worked reasonably well. An international commission has presided for many years at another of the Mediterranean gateways, Tangier. Perhaps what is needed is a Mediterranean Commission under the United Nations to regulate all Mediterranean waterways.

VERNON MCKAY

WEIGH LONG-TERM POLICY

the European picture become as a result of these various Allied denunciations that it sometimes seems impossible to identify such facts as may exist behind the façade of sensational headlines. Without access to confidential documents and private conversations between top diplomats, the most that one can do is to seek interpretation of conflicting versions of the same occurrence through knowledge of the past history, the character, and the ascertainable motives of given nations. The political representatives who conduct tedious negotiations in the full glare of publicity understandably grow weary of the incessant scrutiny to which they are subjected by the newspaper-reading public, and begin to sigh once more for the relative quiet of secret diplomacy. Yet if citizens are to play any part other than that of sheep led to the polls or to the slaughterhouse, they must have a modicum of information about the aims and methods of their governments in world affairs. Otherwise ignorance will eventually lead to apathy, and apathy to fatalistic acceptance of whatever pro-

gram is proposed by an energetic Führer, on the assumption that it is beyond the power of the individual to influence the course of events.

IS WRONG ALL ON ONE SIDE? The most dangerous aspect of any period of ripening crisis is that every government tends to present the position it has taken in the most favorable light possible, and to discredit or disbelieve the contentions of the other side. When the Ukrainian delegate in Paris on August 24 renewed the charges against Britain in Greece which he had already made in January during the United Nations Assembly in London, he mentioned a number of points on which impartial observers from other countries, as well as many Britishers, would be in agreement with him. Yet the British Labor government can convincingly justify the continued presence of British troops on Greek soil for reasons of security in the eastern Mediterranean—and few can quarrel with Mr. Bevin's policy as long as Russian troops are quartered in Bulgaria which, although an Axis satellite, now demands, with Moscow's support, the cession of territory by Greece.

Similarly, few reasonable people would regard the firing by Yugoslav fighter planes on American aircraft as anything but an unfriendly act, especially when committed by one recent ally against another. It would be useful to know, however, whether American planes, which obviously are far superior in numbers to any aircraft at the disposal of Marshal Tito, had made a practice of flying over Yugoslav territory after the Belgrade government had forbidden such flights, and to have Washington's answer to Marshal Tito's charge that reconnaissance flights had been made by American planes in the vicinity of the Morgan Line. It is a matter of common knowledge that espionage and counterespionage are being practiced by all the great powers in Europe—and probably by small nations as well. This may seem a lamentable state of affairs among Allies, but as long as the present conditions of uneasy truce prevail, incidents of the kind that occurred in Yugoslavia (and are reported from the disputed Greek-Albanian border) may be expected to continue. It is entirely possible that Yugoslavia's actions were inspired by Russia. But it would be a mistake to discount the intense nationalism of the Yugoslavs, already displayed a quarter of a century ago at the Paris peace conference of 1919 from which Russia was excluded. This nationalism has been exacerbated by the controversy over Trieste, since

PERON BARGAINS FOR GREATER ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Ratification by the Argentine Senate of the Act of Chapultepec and the United Nations Charter on August 19 was effected in an atmosphere of intense nationalism. The packed galleries and crowds in the

even Yugoslavs favorable to Western democracy find it difficult to understand why Britain and the United States pay heed to the wishes of Italy, whom they regard as an old opponent.

Disturbing as the situation in Europe is bound to be for the United States, it may prove salutary if it convinces us of the need for giving unremitting thought to long-term policy and to the methods of implementing whatever policy we decide to follow. In the past we had too often assumed that this country had fulfilled its international role by sending armed forces to Europe in time of crisis and, once hostilities were over, by helping to succor the victims of war. Now we are forced to realize that, if we are to play a part in shaping the future of Europe, we must not merely counsel action to others, but be prepared to take action ourselves. Even if the fear of the most extreme pessimists should be justified—that Russia wants war—it remains imperative for the United States to know what it is we want beyond the obvious human desire to be left in peace. In weighing the course ahead, we must bear in mind that Russia has been gravely weakened by war, both as to manpower and material resources. Its people, according to the most trustworthy reports, are weary of fighting, and long to obtain some of the good things of life. Yet Russia's reconversion to peacetime production, judging by purges and renewed resort to "self-criticism," is fraught with difficulties. It is very doubtful that the Soviet government would want to embark on war. But neither is it ready apparently to acquiesce in a peace that might diminish the position it had achieved at the high-water mark of victory over Germany. Its present policy is reminiscent of the policy of "no war, no peace" advocated by Trotzky when the Soviet régime found Germany's peace terms unacceptable, and stalled for time, finally acquiescing in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. At the Paris conference the Western powers have tended to remain on the defensive, letting Russia take the lead and reap the resulting publicity—which, on the whole, has been unfavorable to Moscow. The time has come for the United States to assume stronger initiative, not in the sense of imposing its will upon other countries or merely thwarting Russia, but of defining as broadly as possible this country's views on a peace settlement that would take cognizance of the profound changes wrought in Europe by war and accompanying civil strife.

VERA MICHELES DEAN

Plaza before the National Congress made their opposition to any step regarded as limiting Argentine sovereignty so evident that it was necessary to postpone action on the two pacts by the Chamber of

Deputies. While designed to strengthen Argentina in its projected great power role, this step in the direction of international cooperation also has considerable domestic significance. For the ill-assorted groups which support the Perón government, it may have the effect of thrusting old-line nationalists out of the *peronista* following and giving greater prominence to the moderates in the Labor party and the "dissident Radical" faction. To enlist middle class support for the revolution has long been the objective of the Argentine Caudillo. Similarly, the ratification suggests that under pressure of international events Argentina is tending toward greater moderation in its foreign policy; and arouses speculation whether the long-awaited reconciliation with the United States may not be at hand.

ADVANTAGES THROUGH COOPERATION. Unreserved adherence to the principle of international cooperation would mark a radical departure in Argentine policy which by tradition has been tinged with isolationism. This would be particularly true with respect to relations with the inter-American system, which previous Buenos Aires governments desired to subordinate to the League of Nations. Presumably General Perón now believes that material advantages would accrue to Argentina from full participation not only in the United Nations—where the Latin American nations will exercise considerable influence through their combined voting power—but also in the inter-American community. If the strategic, political and economic concepts of the military revolution are to be developed, the Buenos Aires régime requires military equipment in order to place its armed forces on a par with those of Brazil, and heavy machinery to diversify Argentine industry which until now has been deficient in the production of capital goods. Perón's recent overtures of friendship to Washington might be explained as an effort to influence the difficult negotiations currently underway between London and Buenos Aires over extension of the meat contract, the fate of British-owned railways in Argentina, and the disposition of Argentine blocked sterling. In view of Perón's attempt last spring to pit Russia against the United States in the bargaining over the linseed oil price, the supposition is plausible that in this instance the Argentine government is attempting to play the British and American competitors for its markets against each other for such immediate benefits to the national economy as may be forthcoming. That President Perón may be taking a

longer view of Argentina's foreign relations, however, is indicated by a statement he made to an American newspaperman on August 1, when he said that, in any future conflict, "Argentina will be found ranged alongside the United States and the other American nations."

The United States, however, having fared badly in previous negotiations with the Argentine nationalist government, now makes military aid contingent on limited but effective action against former Axis agents and industrial holdings in that country. In return for Argentine control of six "spearhead" German industries and holding companies, public sale of some 30 secondary industries, closure of the remaining German schools, and legal action against a small number of German agents—among whom Ludwig Freude, a key figure in Axis underground activities and a member of the inner circle of the present administration, is not listed—this government is reported to be willing to provide armaments and send a mission to train the Argentine army.

PERON AT A TURNING POINT. In three short months of administration, the energetic Argentine President has swept much of the old conservative order out of existence. At home, the government has established authority over well-nigh the entire political, economic, social and educational structure of the nation through such decrees as the reorganization of political parties, nationalization of the Central Bank, extension of federal control over the universities, and the creation of a Ministry of Labor Abroad, Argentina, which enjoys the status of a creditor nation for the first time in its history, is being courted by the diplomatic and commercial representatives of the three great powers. For a not too heavy price Buenos Aires can effect a rapprochement with Washington which would ease the oppressive inter-American atmosphere and enable Argentina to resume its seat in international councils. The structure of the new authoritarian order in Argentina is almost completed; but the issue of how it is to be used remains in doubt. Possessing extraordinary powers, President Perón can temper the extreme nationalist and isolationist sentiment that prevails in Argentina, or he can fan it for destructive purposes. The new government, which holds a mandate from the laboring people of Argentina to carry out a social and economic revolution, is confronted by the need to take critical and far-reaching decisions on both foreign and domestic policy.

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